DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 173 822 CS 204 970

AUTHOR Dunwoody, Sharon; Scott, Bryon T.
TITLE Scientists and the Press: Are They Really Strangers?
PUB DATE Aug 79
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (62nd, Houston, Texas, August 5-8, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Higher Education; *Interaction; Interpersonal Relationship; *Interprofessional Relationship; *Journalism; Mass Media; *News Media; *News Reporting; *Sciences; Scientific Enterprise; Scientific Literacy; Scientific Personnel; Scientists

ABSTRACT

A group of 111 basic and applied scientists from two Ohio university campuses was interviewed to gather data about the amount of contact between scientists and media reporters, and the effects of such contact on scientists' attitudes toward media coverage of science. The data indicated that scientists had been interviewed by journalists much more frequently than hypothesized, with 75% of the sample expressing interest in further contact with journalists. Social scientists and scientists higher in academic rank had been contacted more frequently than had any other kinds of scientists. Both rank and amount of contact were positively related to evaluations of the quality of mass media science reporting, while scientists were far more critical of media coverage of their own specialty areas than they were of coverage of science in general. (Author/RL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED173822

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Scientists and the Press: Are They Really Strangers?

by

Sharon Dunwoody
Assistant Professor
School of Journalism
Ohio State University

Bryon T. Scott
Associate Professor
School of Journalism
Ohio University

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Sharon Dunwoody
Bryon T. Scott
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Presented to the Mass Communication & Society Division, Association for Education in Journalism, at the annual meeting on 8 August 1979 in Houston.

CS204970

Scientists and the Press: Are They Really Strangers?

Since C.P. Snow postulated the gap between scientific and literary cultures back in the 1950s,[1] science journalists have emphasized the "chasm" that many of them perceive between themselves and their scientific sources. Tradition has it that scientists and journalists simply do not get along, that on the few occasions they do come together, the encounters are tense ones.

The science writer is likely to lay part of the blame for this perceived state of affairs at the feet of the scientists, arguing that, among other problems, the average scientist encounters a journalist so rarely that he or she has little understanding of or sympathy for the news process. Such a scientist, they suggest, regards the press as an apparition and, if given a choice, would avoid contact with journalists. In her book about the few scientists who have become media "stars" in the United States, Rae Goodell encapsulates the science writer's vision of the naive scientist:

> A pale, balding, bespectacled professor in a white laboratory coat steps to the microphone, blinks uncomfortably at the bright camera lights, unfolds a prepared statement from his pocket, and reads it verbatim in a quavering voice. . . .Mercifully, the session is short, and the scientist is allowed to slip peacefully back to his beloved laboratory.[2]

To date, no data have been made available that would allow researchers to confirm or deny the stereotypic notion that the average scientist rarely comes into contact with journalists.[3] Is he or she truly such a stranger to the press? And how is amount of contact, among other variables, related to scientists' attitudes toward mass media coverage of science?

This study attempted to answer some of those questions. We were interested in measuring the amount of contact between scientists and journalists among a sample of university scientists on two Ohio campuses. Additionally, we explored variables that might affect the amount of scientist/journalist interaction and also looked at the effect of contact, among other variables, on scientists' attitudes about press coverage of science.

Hypotheses

Determinants of amount of contact:

As noted above, the investigators could find no studies documenting frequency of contact between scientists and journalists. But we decided to hypothesize that the average scientists would not have encountered a journalist not only because the position is in harmony with anecdotal evidence from science writers but also because other evidence indirectly suggests such a hypothesis.

For example, the small percentage of editorial space in newspapers given over to science news implies that journalists do not seek out great numbers of scientists. In a recent study

Nunn has found that newspapers in 1971 provided only 5% of their editorial space for science news, and that percentage actually decreased in 1977.[4] Since the newspaper is the medium most likely to be in contact with scientists in a given community, such a finding seems, if anything, to indicate a decreasing amount of interaction between scientists and journalists.

Findings from the sociology of science literature also point to lack of contact between many scientists and journalists. For example, one would expect that journalists are most likely to interact with what is termed by sociologists the "active" scientific community, those who are involved in doing research, publishing their results and communicating with one another. But according to de Solla Price, that community may amount to no more than 25% of the total population of scientists in the United States, since many scientists with Ph.D. degrees never publish more than one paper, usually a part of their doctoral dissertation, and half of all Ph.D.s never publish at all.[5] If most scientists in a given institutional setting are indeed not "active," then one would expect little or no contact between them and journalists.

Finally, the reward system in science may make scientists reluctant to interact with the press. Scientists are rewarded by other scientists, not by the public. So generating <u>public</u> information, according to sociologists like Hagstrom, usually does little to help the scientist get ahead within science and in fact can have a negative effect on a scientist's

prestige.[6] One cannot expect an individual to participate in a process in which there are few rewards and for which he or she might even be punished.

Taking all these factors into account, we hypothesized:

H1: A scientist is more likely not to have been in contact than to have been in contact with a mass media journalist. In other words, we hypothesized that most scientists in our sample would never have enountered journalists.

Of those scientists who have been involved in mass dissemination of science, however, it was felt that their specialty area might make a difference in amount of contact. Once again, no data were available, but Cole[7] and Olean[8] have indicated that coverage of the social sciences has increased enormously in the last 10 to 15 years. Additionally, social scientists have sometimes noted that journalists seem less hesitant to tackle psychological or sociological topics than the more technical areas in the hard sciences.[9] Thus we posited:

H2: Social scientists are more likely to have been contacted by journalists for a story than are scientists in other fields.

In a study of doctors and biologists in Paris, Boltanski and Maldidier[10] found that scientists who occupied higher academic ranks in their universities had participated more in the mass media dissemination process than had their lower-ranking colleagues.

So it was hypothesized:

H3: Higher ranking scientists will have a higher level

of involvement in mass media dissemination than will lower ranking scientists.

Determinants of attitude:

Boltanski and Maldidier, in the same French study, also found that higher-ranking scientists had more favorable attitudes toward mass media dissemination of science than did their lower ranking colleagues. So we posited:

H4: The higher the scientist's academic rank, the more favorably he or she will evaluate mass media coverage of science.

Carter, in a study of the relationships between medical doctors and journalists, found that physicians who had dealt with journalists evaluated media coverage of science more favorably than those who had not.[11] So it was hypothesized:

H5: The higher the frequency of contact between a scientist and journalists, the more favorably the scientist will evaluate mass media dissemination of science.

Although the investigators could find no relevant data, it seemed logical to conclude that scientists would evaluate the quality of science coverage by mass media differently depending on their familiarity with the particular area of science being covered. Thus we hypothesized,

H6: Scientists will more favorably evaluate mass media coverage of science outside their own specialty area than they will coverage of their specialty areas.

The effects of mediators in the media dissemination process are not known. Since most scientists are grouped in institutional

settings, mediators--such as public information personnel--are facts of life and often play an active role as intermediaries between scientists and journalists. If one viewed a mediator as something of a "buffer" between the two, then one might hypothesize that mediators could protect scientists from bad expereinces with media personnel. So we hypothesized:

H7: The greater the proportion of his or her stories generated via public information mediators, the more favorably the scientist will evaluate mass media coverage of science.

Finally, since we had hypothesized earlier that amount of contact with journalists would be positively associated with attitudes toward mass media coverage of science, we felt that differential levels of contact with different types of media reporters would produce variance in preferences among scientists for further contact with those reporters. More specifically, since we felt that scientists would be likely to encounter more print than broadcast journalists, we posited:

H8: Given the option, scientists are more likely to choose contact with a print journalist than with a broadcast journalist.

Method

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with a sample of scientists from both Ohio State University and Ohio University during spring 1978.

The samples were drawn separately at each university in proportion to the size of the scientific faculty and using

systematic random sampling techniques. A scientist for purposes of this study was an assistant professor, associate professor, full professor or emeritus professor affiliated with physical or social science departments. natural resources, agriculture, engineering, nursing or medicine.[12] The OSU sample totaled 115 scientists, while 35 were drawn from the OU scientist population.[13]

An eight-page questionnaire was constructed and pretested. Interviewers, who were students in science writing classes offered at both universities, then conducted interviews with scientists over a two-week period.* Most interviews averaged a half hour in length.

Response rate for the OSU sample was 68.7%, or 79 of 115. Interviewers at OU completed 32 of 35, for a response rate of 91.4%. Response rate for both samples together was 74.7%.[14]

Analysis of the two samples revealed few dissimilarities across a range of demographic variables (see Table 1) as well as across the attitudinal variables being analyzed below, so the OSU and OU samples were merged and will be discussed in the rest of the paper as one sample.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Findings

The "average" scientist. The average scientist in this study was male, in his early to mid 40s and had earned the

---

*The researchers gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the students, without whom in-depth interviews could not have been conducted.

Ph.D. (see Table 1). He had spent approximately 13 years on the faculty and had authored about four journal articles. He was most likely to be either an associate professor or a full professor, although one in five respondents was an assistant professor.

The largest proportion of scientists (34.2%) in the study were in the hard sciences, including such fields as physics, chemistry and biology. Approximately one in five scientists was a social scientist, and the same proportion were involved in such applied areas as engineering and computer sciences. Medicine accounted for 17.1% of the respondents, and agriculture was the specialty of another 5.4%.

Determinants of amount of contact. We had hypothesized that the average scientist in this study was more likely not to have been contacted by journalists than to have been contacted. Our sample disproved this hypothesis. Of the 111 scientists, 67.6% indicated they had granted an interview with a journalist, while 32.4% had not. Using a test for significant differences between proportions suggested by Blalock,[15] one finds that the difference is significant with a probability of less than .001. Scientists in the sample indeed were more likely to have been in contact with journalists than not.

In fact, the respondents in this study had been involved in a median 4.6 interviews with journalists during their careers. Nearly 100% of the interviews tookplace face-to-face.

But could extent of contact be related to such things as a scientist's specialty area? This study had hypothesized that social scientists were more likely to have been contacted than any other type of scientist, and analysis proved this to be the case (see Table 2). A larger proportion of social scientists (.70) had granted an interview with a journalist than had scientists in any other specialty area. Social scientists were followed by physicians (.68), with applied scientists (.63) third and hard scientists (.58) last. The test for significant differences between proportions indicated the difference between social scientists and physicians was significant at p=.05.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Data also indicated that, as hypothesized, higher ranking scientists had greater amounts of contact with journalists than did lower ranking scientists. Correlating rank with number of interviews given by a scientist yielded a Kendall's tau of .29, significant at p=.001.

Summary. Contrary to our expectations, scientists in this study were no strangers to journalists.

The majority of them had been interviewed by a mass media journalist, and the average scientist had been involved in at least four such encounters. Social scientists were more likely to have been in contact with journalists than were scientists in any other specialty area, although incidence

of contact was fairly high regardless of specialty area. Additionally, the higher a scientist's rank, the more interviews he had given to journalists.

Determinants of attitude toward mass media coverage of science. Respondents' general attitudes toward mass media coverage of science were measured with three variables. Each asked the scientist to evaluate a certain area of coverage on a five-point scale, with 1 defined as "very bad," 5 as "very good" and the mid point defined as "neutral." The first question asked respondents to evaluate coverage of science as a whole by mass media. The second asked for an evaluation of coverage of a scientist's particular specialty area by media. And the third then asked the respondent to evaluate coverage of science outside his or her specialty area.

It was noted above that a scientist's rank was positively related to frequency of contact with the media. But do either rank or frequence of contact have any relationship to a scientist's evaluation of media coverage of science? We examined this question by correlating rank and level of contact with the three attitude measures described above.

Kendall's tau correlations on the whole were low, but it was interesting to note that while both rank and frequency of contact were significantly correlated with evaluation of coverage in general (correlations of .14 and .17 at $p < .05$, respectively), only rank was significantly correlated with a scientist's evaluation of media coverage of his specialty area

(.19 at $p < .05$) and only frequency of contact was significantly correlated with a scientist's evaluation of mass media coverage of science outside his specialty area (.17 at $p < .05$).

So while both rank and frequency of contact do seem to be moderately related to a scientist's evaluation of the quality of mass media coverage of science, rank seems to be a better predictor of a scientist's evaluation of coverage in his own area while simple frequency of contact is a better predictor of evaluation of science coverage outside the scientist's bailiwick.

This findings suggest that measures of attitude toward science coverage in general and attitudes about coverage of a scientist's own area in specific may be tapping two different things. It would seem logical that a scientist would be more attentive to coverage of his area of expertise and would be able to differentiate between his specialty and the rest of science when making evaluations.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that scientists indeed would differentiate and that they would be more critical of coverage of their own areas than of coverage outside their areas. Data support the hypothesis. On a scale of 1 to 5 (very bad to very good), scientists in the sample generated a mean rating of 2.2 for their specialty area and a mean rating of 2.9 for coverage of science outside their area. A t-test indicated the difference between the two means was significant at $p < .001$. Scientists indeed are more critical of coverage of their own areas than they are of coverage of areas outside their own.

One reason scientists might be more critical of coverage of their own areas is that they are intimately acquainted with those areas and can easily recognize reporting and judgment errors in related stories. This line of reasoning argues that the less knowledgeable the scientist is about a topic, the less critical he or she will be about coverage of that topic. Does an evaluation of science coverage in general, then -- which should include attitudes toward both specialty area and nonspecialty areas--reflect the more critical attitude toward the former or the less critical evaluation of the latter?

Findings in this study indicate that the mean evaluation of science coverage in general (2.8) is much closer to the evaluation of doverage of areas outside a respondent's specialty area (2.9) than to the evaluation of quality of coverage of specialty area (2.2). Once again, this finding seems to point out the importance of learning just what we are measuring when we ask for evaluations of general science coverage.

The extent of use of mediators by scientists in this study had no relationship whatever to their attitudes about mass media science coverage. Hypothesis 7 suggested that a positive correlation would be found, but the number of times a scientist dealt with the press through the mediation of public information personnel had no relationship with his or her subsequent evaluation of the quality of science coverage. Scientists who did not use mediators were just as favorable

or unfavorable about press coverage as scientists who did utilize public information personnel.

Finally, we had hypothesized that respondents would prefer to deal with representatives of the print media rather than with journalists from the broadcast media.

Before testing the hypothesis, we were interested in how respondents would compare the quality of science coverage across magazines, newspapers, radio and television. So we asked respondents to tell us which medium does the best job and which does the worst job of covering science in general, and then asked them who does the best and worst jobs of covering their particular specialty areas.

Magazines were preferred over all media in each case (see Tables 3 and 4). Television was favored by a higher proportion of scientists for general science coverage than were newspapers but when ranking the worst and best communicators of news about their specialty areas, scientists consistently favored print over broadcast media.

TABLES 3 AND 4 ABOUT HERE

Then we asked respondents to rank the four media according to their preferences for contact. That is, they were asked to suppose that they were being contacted by a journalist and then were asked to rank the types of journalists preferentially, with "1" as the highest ranking and "4" the lowest. Although the resulting mean rankings support

hypothesis 8, the preference for magazines is again clear. Magazines received an average ranking of 1.5, followed by newspapers at 2.3, television at 2.9 and radio at 3.3.

Summary. Scientists in this study were more likely to be critical of mass media coverage of their own specialty areas than of coverage of science outside their area of expertise. Both rank and frequency of contact between a scientist and the press were positively related to evaluations of the quality of general press coverage, but rank was a better predictor of a scientist's evaluation of coverage of his own specialty area while frequency of contact was a better predictor of evaluation of coverage outside a respondent's own area.

Extent of a scientist's involvement with mediators such as public information personnel had no relationship to his evaluations of the quality of science coverage.

Respondents in this study showed a distinct preference for magazine coverage of science and for magazine journalists.

Discussion

If this study is any indication, the notion that the average scientist has no experience with the press is invalid. Respondents had indeed come into contact with journalists, some four times on the average. And when asked what their general reaction to the next call from a journalist would be, 75% responded that they "would welcome the contact. Another 11% indicated they would agree to the interview but regarded the contact as "a necessary evil." Only 2.2% of this sample

said they would avoid any more contact with the mass media.

Even further evidence of closer links between scientists and the media lies in the finding that 15% of 80 respondents said they have initiated contact with a journalist. And a surprising 30.4% of 79 respondents said that they had written at least one story themselves (possibly as a press release) for mass media dissemination. Such activities are certainly in direct contrast to the "passive" scientist so often pictured by science writers.

It would seem that the scientists in this study have had a fair amount of experience with the press and, although they remain fairly critical of the quality of science writing in the media, they are open to further contact and seem to actually welcome the chance to interact with journalists.

Although our "average" scientist seems to be a far cry from our original expectations, it should be emphasized that the setting for this study and the mechanics involved in gathering the data may limit the generalizability of results somewhat. Because they are in a university setting, the respondents in this study were more likely to have come into contact with student journalists than would scientists in nonuniversity environments; this factor could have increased the level of contact for the group.[16]

Additionally, scientists who truly dislike and avoid the media are not likely to agree to an interview with a journalism student, either, and nonresponses at the OSU site were fairly high for a face-to-face interview situation. One can only

guess that a higher response rate might have produced a more conservative picture.

But the findings do point to a position that is tenable. Scientists today are coming into contact with journalists, and that contact may be evolving into a more "normal" relationship between source and journalist than that still perceived by science journalists.

The findings also do not support the sociological bases we used to hypothesize lack of contact among scientists and journalists. For example, we had felt that journalists would seek out the relatively small number of productive scientists in any given locale, since these were the individuals engaged in research. But a measure of productivity in this study--number of journal articles published by a scientist within the last five years--showed absolutely no relationship with level of reporter contact (Pearson product-moment correlation of -.07).

And studies by sociologists interested in normative aspects of science had led us to predict that popularization would, if anything, be actively avoided by scientists. Yet three-quarters of our sample indicated they would welcome further contact from journalists. Obviously, they are <u>not</u> being negatively rewarded for using communication channels outside science itself.

This study also points up the importance of examining the attitudes and behaviors of scientists as information sources. The Boltanski and Maldidier study in France[17] is one of the few to do so while taking into account such important normative

variables as peer status among scientists. Is it really the case, as they conclude that lower ranking scientists are more reluctant to talk to journalists because they are under substantial pressure to prove themselves first in the scientific community before sallying forth into the public domain? Are higher ranking scientists thus more favorable toward the media because they are indeed the "spokesmen" of science? Or is attitude, as some social psychologists would argue, positively related to nothing more complex than simple frequency of exposure to journalists, something that in turn may be a simple function of time. Both rank and frequency of contact are positively related to attitudes in this study, but a great deal of research needs to be done to clear up the ambiguities.

Measurement of the attitudes themselves needs more careful attention in future studies. For example, this study found a substantial difference in attitudes depending on whether scientists were queried about their evaluation of general science coverage or about their evaluations of specific types of coverage. Tichenor, Olien, Harrison and Donohue[18] found a similar discrepancy between scientists' evaluations of general accuracy of science coverage and their evaluations of the accuracy of specific stories (respondents rated the accuracy of the specific stories much more highly than they did the accuracy of science news in general). It is important to begin to examine what we in fact are measuring with general attitude questions and perhaps to begin to place more emphasis on attitudes of sources toward objects or processes with which they are reasonably

knowledgeable. Scientists, for example, are often considered to be experts in all aspects of science. But the scientist confronted with questions about coverage of science outside his or her own area may in fact provide responses that are no more knowledgeable than those of educated lay persons.

Few attempts have been made in this country to evaluate the effect of 'mediators' on mass media dissemination of science. Since scientists are often grouped in the kinds of institutions that utilize public information mediators, they make excellent subjects for examination. This research, as did an earlier study of social scientists by Bassett, Davison and Hopson,[19] found that mediators really didn't seem to make much difference in scientists' attitudes toward the press. Such a finding is difficult to understand in light of data from accuracy studies like those of Tichenor et. al.[20] indicating that mass media articles originating from press releases and other mediator-generated publications are more likely to be accurate than those based purely on personal contact. Scientists are concerned about accuracy but yet do not seem to embrace an available mechanism that can enhance accuracy.

Finally, it seems clear from this study that scientists feel that magazines do by far the best job of covering science for the interested lay public. And by a wide margin they prefer to deal with a magazine journalist rather than a representative of any other medium. Such attitudes are interesting in light of the finding that scientists in this

sample were not at all likely to have come into contact with a magazine journalist. The reporter most likely to be encountered was the newspaper journalist, followed by television reporters. Both radio and magazine reporters were rare. Thus in this specific instance, frequency of contact seems to have little to do with attitude.

One possible explanation for the preference for magazines and magazine journalists is that the scientist is most familiar with that mode of communication. Within science, the journal is the dominant means of formal communication. Additionally, journal publication is usually associated with positive feelings since it is closely tied to the reward system in science. So one might expect scientists to prefer the type of mass communication most closely associated with their own experience.

References

[1]C.P. Snow, The Two Cultures and a Second Look (London: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

[2]Rae Goodell, The Visible Scientists (Boston) Little, Brown and Company, 1977) p. 3.

[3]The researchers, both of whom have worked as mass media science writers, base this "notion" on personal experiences and on anecdotal evidence from science-writing colleagues. Problems of dealing with scientists as information sources have received much attention from the science-writing community, and one major theme running through the discussions is the assumption that many scientists simply have not encountered reporters often enough to have learned how to cope with media. Issues of the NASW Newsletter, published by the National Association of Science Writers, Inc., are replete with references to reporter/source problems. Canadian science writers also indicate that scientists' unfamiliarity with media processes and their reluctance to deal with media are the most serious obstacles to effective mass media science writing. See Orest Dubas and Lisa Martel, Media Impact, vol. 2 (Ottawa: Ministry of State, 1975) p. 144.

[4]Clyde Z. Nunn, "Readership and Coverage of Science and Technology in Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly 56:27-30, Spring 1979.

[5]Derek de Solla Price, Little Science, Big Science (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963) pp. 40-45.

[6]Warren O. Hagstrom, The Scientific Community (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965) pp. 34-35.

[7]Bruce Cole, "Science Conflict: A Content Analysis of Four Major Metro Newspapers, 1951, 1961, 1971, unpublished Master's thesis, University of Minnesota, 1974.

[8]Mona M. Olean, Communicating with the Public--Via the Media--About Psychology (Washington, D.C.: The American Psychological Association, 1977).

[9]Laurel Walum, sociologist, personal interview, March 1973, Columbus, Ohio.

[10]L. Boltanski and P. Maldidier, "Carriere Scientifique, Moral Scientifique et Vulgarisation," Social Science Information, 9:99-118, 1970.

[11]Roy E. Carter, Jr., "Newspaper 'Gatekeepers' and the Sources of News," Public Opinion Quarterly 22:133-144, Summer 1958.

[12]Faculty/Staff directories were used at both universities. To make populations comparable at both schools, the following departments at OSU were excluded: dentistry, veterinary medicine, optometry, engineering mechanics, engineering graphics and family relations and human development. Social science departments excluded at both universities were history, economics and journalism. Those included were communication, psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science and geography.

[13]The larger OSU sample reflects both the larger size of the university compared to OU and the greater size of the OSU science writing class, which provided a larger pool of interviewers.

[14]Slightly different sampling techniques were used at each university. At Ohio State, scientists who refused or indicated they could not participate in the study were not replaced, while scientists unavailable as respondents in the Ohio University sample were replaced by others drawn from the same cohorts.

[15]Hubert M. Blalock Jr., Social Statistics, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972) pp. 228-232.

[16]Examination of the OSU and OU groups separately provides some support for this suspicion. Students at OSU are required to work for the student newspaper as part of their journalism curriculum, while the student newspaper at OU is an independent entity, attracting only those students interested in working on it in their spare time. The situation at OSU produces an extremely large newspaper staff, and coverage of OSU academic departments is thus much more intense than would be expected by the fewer journalists at Ohio University. Levels of contact for scientists at the two universities show variance that fits this pattern. While 72% of the OSU scientists indicated they had granted at least one interview with a journalist, only 56% of the OU scientists said so. And the median number of interviews granted by an OSU scientist was 5.3, much greater than the median 3.9 interviews granted by an OU scientist. Of course, it should be noted that other variables, such as geographical location of the university and level of activity of respective public information components, also should be taken into account.

[17]Boltanski and Maldidier, op. cit.

[18]P. Tichenor, C. Olien, A. Harrison and G.A. Donohue, "Mass Communication Systems and Communication Accuracy in Science News Reporting," Journalism Quarterly 47:673-683, Winter 1970.

[19]Grace Bassett, W.P. Davison, and Anna Lee Hopson, "Social Scientists, University News Bureaus, and the Public," Unpublished paper prepared for Russell Sage Foundation, New York, March 1968.

[20]Tichenor et. al., op. cit.

Table 1

Comparison of OSU and OU Scientists
Across a Range of Descriptive Variables

Variable	OSU (n=79)	OU (n=32)	Combined (=111)
%tage with Ph.D.	92.4%	90.6%	91.9%
Average age	early to mid 40s		
%tage male	93.7%	78.1%	90.1%
Faculty rank:			
assistant prof	22.8%	15.6%	20.7%
associate prof	40.5%	40.6%	40.5%
professor	31.6%	40.6%	34.2%
emeritus	3.8%	3.1%	3.7%
other	1.3%	3.1%	1.8%
Median number of years on the faculty	13.2	13.1	13.1
Median number of journal articles	4.7	3.1	4.3
Specialty area:			
hard sciences	35.4%	31.3%	34.2%
social sciences	11.4%	43.8%	20.7%
applied sciences	22.8%	18.8%	21.6%
medicine	22.8%	3.1%	17.1%
agriculture	7.6%	0	5.4%

Table 2

Proportion of Scientists,
Stratified by Specialty Area,
Experiencing Contact with Journalists at Least Once

	Contacted by journalist? Yes	No	
Social scientists	.78	.22	(n=23)
Medical scientists	.68	.32	(n=19)
Applied scientists	.63	.37	(n=24)
Hard scientists	.58	.42	(n=38)

n=104

Table 3

Proportion of Respondents
Evaluating the Best and Worst Media
for Coverage of Science in General

	Best job/ ranking	Worst job/ ranking
Magazines	.58 (1)	.08 (4)
Newspapers	.12 (3)	.35 (1)
Television	.27 (2)	.29 (2)
Radio	.03 (4)	.28 (3)
n=100	1.00	1.00

Table 4

Proportion of Respondents
Evaluating the Best and Worst Media
for Coverage of Their Particular Specialty Areas*

	Best job/ ranking	Worst job/ ranking
Magazines	.54 (1)	.07 (4)
Newspapers	.22 (2)	.22 (3)
Television	.08 (3)	.33 (1)
Radio	.04 (4)	.27 (2)
	.88	.89

*12% said their speciality area was not covered

n=102